IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please insert the following paragraph prior to the first paragraph of the specification:

This application is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/959,222, filed February 5, 2002, which is a 371 of PCT/CA00/00546, filed May 5, 2000, which claims benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/132,701, filed May 5, 1999.

Please replace the first full paragraph (beginning on line 3) of page 3, with the following paragraph:

A power drive mechanism, generally designated 10, for power operated opening and closing of a vehicle liftgate 9 is shown in FIG.1. The structure of the vehicle liftgate ~~(not shown)~~ 9 is conventional and is illustrated in United States Patent nos. 5,448,856 and 5,563,483. A typical vehicle liftgate 9 is pivotally mounted at the rear of a mini van or recreational-type vehicle by hinges (not shown) mounted between the top of the vehicle liftgate 9 and a portion 11 of the frame 15 of the vehicle. The liftgate 9 has a conventional power operated latch assembly (not shown) mounted at a central portion of its lower edge that releasably latches to a striker appropriately mounted on the vehicle frame.

Please replace the second full paragraph (beginning on line 17) of page 5, with the following paragraph:

The actuating link 46 is operatively associated with a holding linkage comprising a holding link 60 (partially cut away in FIG. 4) and an elongated, rigid connecting link 62. Connecting link 62 that is pivotally mounted between the lower arm 52 and an upper portion of the holding link 60 by conventional rivets 64. The holding link 60 is operatively associated with the gear train 20 to maintain the gears 22, 24 in engagement with one another during automatic operation of the liftgate. An edge portion of the holding link 60 is pivotally mounted to an edge portion of the bracket

assembly 36 by a pin 65. The holding link 60 is a metal structure preferably made of steel and is provided with a slot 66 that defines a plurality of notches therein including an upper releasing notch 68 and a lower holding notch 70. A holding pin 72 is rigidly secured to the mounting bracket 14 and is received within the slot 66. The holding link 60 slidably engages the pin 72 for guiding movement of the holding link 60 with respect to the pin 72 between holding and releasing positions.

Please replace the first full paragraph (beginning on line 7) of page 6 with the following paragraph:

An extension spring 88 is mounted between a post 90 ~~on the switch 82~~ and the bracket assembly 36 to bias the bracket assembly to disengage from the motor gear 22 when the vehicle is moving or when the liftgate is being manually opened or closed.

Please replace the second full paragraph (beginning on line 11) of page 6 with the following paragraph:

Power operation of the power drive mechanism 10 can be controlled electronically using conventional electronic control circuitry which is mounted in the vehicle. The actuator gear 24 is normally not in meshing engagement with the motor gear 22. The control circuitry can be programmed such that when power operated liftgate opening is initiated, the actuator 74 and drive motor 34 are energized in sequence. The actuator 74 moves the actuator gear 24 into engagement with the motor gear 22 and moves the holding link 60 into locking relation with the holding pin 72 to releasably hold the actuator gear 24 and motor gear 22 together during power liftgate movement. The drive motor 34, acting through the gear train 20, moves the crank arm 12 in its opening direction. The circuitry then disengages the holding link 60 from the holding pin 72 and ~~the~~ moves the actuator gear 24 and motor gear 22 out of meshing engagement when the gate is open. The powered closing operation is essentially the reverse of the opening operation. During power operated liftgate closing, the gear holding link 60 holds the actuator gear 24 and the motor gear 22 in meshing, torque transmitting engagement to prevent the gears 22, 24 from slipping relative to one another and to reduce or eliminate gear noise.

Please replace the second full paragraph (beginning on line 26) of page 8 and ending on the top of Page 9 with the following paragraph:

As the crank arm 12 moves in the opening direction, the linking arm 18 pivotally mounted between the crank arm 12 and the left edge of the liftgate, moves the liftgate upwardly toward its open position as the gas struts 19 ~~(not shown)~~ elongate. The structure and operation of the gas struts is conventional and well known. Each gas strut includes an elongated structure that is spring biased to move telescopically out of a second elongated structure to provide a spring biased pushing force as the first elongated structure moves outwardly. The speed of the outward movement is limited in a well known manner, typically by a restricted flow of a gas within the strut. It is well known that before the spring biased movement of the gas strut begins, however, the first structure must be moved out of the second member a predetermined distance. The linking arm 18 and crank arm 12 push the liftgate upwardly during a power gate opening operation almost the entire upward range of movement of the liftgate. Because there is only one power drive mechanism 10 associated with the liftgate, a large torsional force is applied to the mounting bracket 14 during the liftgate opening and closing.

Please replace the second full paragraph (beginning on line 19) of page 9 with the following paragraph:

A comparison of FIGS. 5 and 6 shows that as the crank arm 12 moves in a clockwise direction (from the point of view of FIGS. 4-7) from its fully closed position (shown in FIG. 5) to its fully opened position (FIG. 6), the switch 82 is toggled. More specifically, as the crank arm 12 is moved to its fully opened position by the gas struts, a switch arm 84 rigidly mounted on the crank arm 12 by rivets 85 moves into contact with ~~a~~ the switch structure 86 of the switch 82 mounted in fixed relation to the mounting bracket 14 and further movement of the switch arm 84 (and crank arm 12) thereafter depresses the switch structure 86 to toggle the switch 82 to indicate to the electronic control unit 80 that the liftgate is in the full open position. The electronic control unit 80 in response energizes the actuator motor to drive the same in a disengaging direction for a predetermined period of time to disengage the actuator gear 24 from the motor

gear 22 and to move the holding link 60 with respect to the holding pin 72 so that the holding pin 72 is disposed in the upper releasing position to allow the actuator gear 24 to move pivotally away from the motor gear 22 to the position shown in FIG. 7. The actuator gear 24 is disengaged from the motor gear 22 when the liftgate is open, thereby allowing the vehicle user to close the vehicle liftgate manually without backdriving the motor. The liftgate is held in its fully open position by the gas struts.